

98-84379-24

Nash, R.

Reduction of hours of work
for women

[Manchester]

[1892?]

98-84379-24

MASTER NEGATIVE #

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION DIVISION

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET

ORIGINAL MATERIAL AS FILMED - EXISTING BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

334	
25	Nash, Mrs. R
v 5	Reduction of hours of work for women; some points in the time regulations of the factory act. [Manchester, 1892?] 7 p. (Women's co-operative guild; investiga- tion papers, I)
	19 c.m.
	Vol. of Pamphlets

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: Reproductions may not be made without permission from Columbia University Libraries.

TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mmREDUCTION RATIO: 10:1IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA IIA IB IIBDATE FILMED: 4-1-98INITIALS: RBTRACKING # : 32598

FILMED BY PRESERVATION RESOURCES, BETHLEHEM, PA.

7-8 12-11-11
B1311 - GUM No 9 334 35 119

WOMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE GUILD.

INVESTIGATION PAPERS.—I.

REDUCTION OF HOURS OF WORK FOR WOMEN.

SOME POINTS IN THE TIME REGULATIONS OF THE FACTORY ACT.

[By Mrs. VAUGHAN NASH.]

A LARGE number of the members of the guild have worked under the Factory Acts themselves, and those who have not probably have relatives and friends in factories and workshops. Every member, therefore, probably knows a good deal about the law in at least one class of workplaces, but there are probably not many who know how many different sets of regulations there are for different trades and for different classes of workplaces. Yet every working woman ought to be familiar with the factory laws. The idea of a strike against some condition of labour imposed by the employer has become very familiar to working women; yet they have not of late years joined in any widespread attempt to agitate for an improvement of the law. There is too much inclination to accept with resignation whatever the law allows. It is the law, and there is no more to be said. So many people seem to think. Some even fancy that the law lays down inexorable rules which compel them to work a certain number of hours a day. Of course nothing could be further from the truth than this.

TEN HOURS DAY, TEXTILES; AND TEN-AND-A-HALF HOURS DAY,
NON-TEXTILES.

But it was in no spirit of unquestioning resignation that the law was thought of by working people thirty years ago.

The ten hours day which now prevails in the textile (a) trades was won, it should never be forgotten, by a working-class agitation. Philanthropists like Bull and Oastler were the leaders, it is true, but they had the workers behind them. The agitation was full-grown when in 1833 Lord Shaftesbury undertook to advocate the ten hours in Parliament, and it was not finally set at rest by the compromise he made in 1850. A little bit of the history of this agitation is worth remembering, because it gives the key to one of the most unaccountable-looking features of the acts as they stand now—the difference between the regulations of the two principal classes of workplaces. The ten hours limit was first demanded in Parliament in behalf of the textile operatives in 1831. The workers' short-time committees and their leaders carried on nearly a twenty years' fight against the manufacturers and individualists, and the question was not finally settled when, in 1850, Lord Shaftesbury, rather than entirely fail, as he feared, to secure a workable law, accepted a day of ten-and-a-half hours instead of ten. At that time only the textile trades were under regulation at all. It was found, however, that other trades required the protection of the law at least as much as the textiles, and, from 1860 onwards, a series of fresh laws brought various non-textile trades under the Factory Acts, including, of course, the ten-hours-and-a-half regulation. Later the textiles began agitating afresh for themselves, and at length, in 1874, they won their ten hours day in 1874; but there was nobody to fight for a like concession to the less strongly organised non-textiles; and they work, as you know, ten-and-a-half hours to this day, though in many of them the work is far heavier than in the textile trades. The textiles have had the ten hours for twenty-one years, and the cotton operatives, the most powerful section of the textiles, were asking, not long ago, for eight hours. Is it not time for some one to speak up for the weaker trades?

MEAL TIMES.

The difference between ten and ten-and-a-half hours is not

(a) *Textile* trades are trades which are concerned with the manufacture, &c., of cotton, wool, hair, silk, flax, hemp, jute, and similar materials. The following are *not* included as textiles: Print works, bleach and dye works, lace warehouses, paper, rope, and hat works. These and, roughly speaking, all other manufactures are classed as *non-textile* trades.

all, however. The non-textiles have half-an-hour less for meal-times than the textiles, and an hour's extra work on Saturdays. The following little table, which applies to young persons and women (b) will show the differences clearly:—

	TEXTILE. NON-TEXTILE.	
	Hours.	Hours.
1. DAILY WORK (except Saturday):—		
Actual work	10	10½
Meal-time (c)	2	1½
Total working-day (meals plus work).....	12	12
2. SATURDAY'S WORK:—		
Actual work	6½(d)	7½
Meal-time	½ hr.	½ hr.
Total working-day.....	7(d)	8
3. WEEK'S WORK:—		
Actual work	56½	60

CONTINUOUS SPELL OF WORK.

Then there is a difference in the spell of continuous work allowed. A young person or a woman may not, in the textile trades, work for more than four-and-a-half hours without a break, but may work five hours in the non-textile. Why should a carder have two hours for her meals, and a dress-maker only an hour-and-a-half? Or why should the dress-makers' apprentice be allowed to work for five hours without stopping, when the tenter may not? It is not that the dress-maker is stronger than the other; indeed in the instances given it would probably be the other way. It is not that foreign competition or any supposed necessity of trade require it in the one case and not in the other. It is simply that the textile operatives have known how to ask for what they need and to get it.

SATURDAY IN NON-TEXTILE FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.

Even a greater hardship than the extra half-hour's work and the shorter meal-time on full workdays is the state of the Saturday regulations in the non-textile trades. The trouble arose from allowing the non-textiles, for the sake of convenience, to begin work later in the morning. Textile factories

(b) A young person is a person between fourteen and eighteen, but a child of thirteen may work as a young person if he (or she) has fulfilled certain educational requirements. A woman means a woman over eighteen.

(c) At least one hour of the time allowed for meals (either at one time or at different times) must be before three p.m.

(d) In the textile trades manufacturing processes must cease half-an-hour before work must end.

are allowed to begin the twelve hours "period of employment" on ordinary weekdays at six and end it at six, or to begin at seven and end at seven. Non-textile factories and workshops are allowed either of these periods, or they may, if they prefer, work from eight to eight.^(e) There does not seem to be any objection to allowing this choice of hours on ordinary days; but it has spoilt the Saturday. As work was allowed to begin later, it was thought proper to allow it to go on later, so as not to reduce the length of the working day; and consequently non-textile factories and workshops may work from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., or 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., or 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Now a half-holiday which does not begin till 4 o'clock is not worth calling a half-holiday at all. At best the name is unsuitable to a day's work of $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Even the textile half-holiday has something wrong about it. The textile mills work $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours, but it does not need much knowledge of arithmetic to discover that half of ten is five, and not six-and-a-half. But the loss of the free afternoon is aggravated by another hardship. The compulsory meal time on Saturday is only half-an-hour. This is very well in the textile factories, where it serves for a morning meal, and the worker is free to go home to dinner at 1 or 2 o'clock (*f*); but the dressmaker or other worker who begins work at eight, having breakfasted before she starts from home, gets only half-an-hour for dinner, which she probably takes in the work-room. This very likely means that she takes a cup of tea, and puts off taking proper food and rest till she gets home after leaving work at 4 o'clock. One is not surprised to hear that after a day's work on this plan women are often more tired by the so-called half-day's work of Saturday than by a full day's work with the more liberal meal times. The remedy, however, is not to lengthen the meal time, but to shorten the Saturday's labour, so that the workers may get home to dinner at 1-30 at latest, and have the rest of the day free. *A real half-holiday on Saturday* is one of the first things which ought to be put into the next Factory Act. This ought to be

(e) The Secretary of State can give permission to work from nine to nine, but no child may work after eight, and this arrangement is not allowed on Saturdays.

(f) At 1 if work began at 6, at 2 if it began at 7. If the employer chooses to begin at 6, and allow an hour or more for meals, he may continue work till 1-30.

done for both classes of workplaces, and at the same time the non-textile hours should be reduced to the textile standard.

SPECIAL REGULATIONS.

So far we have been considering the normal regulations for textile and non-textile trades. Under certain circumstances less strict arrangements are allowed in non-textile workshops where only women are employed; and, again, there is an eight-hour Saturday allowed on certain conditions in non-textile workshops where only eight hours have been worked on the other days in the week. Want of space, however, makes it impossible to go into any but the most pressing matters here. I only mention these regulations to show how many loop-holes there are in the Act, and how far it is from being a law which we can accept without question as final and satisfactory.

There is also, it is no exaggeration to say, a host of "exceptions," exemptions, and special regulations allowing exceptional hours in various trades. These require the closest watching. Some may be harmless and necessary, others certainly are mischievous. The only one which can be gone into here is the new section affecting laundries.

LAUNDRIES.

Until this year's Act, laundries were omitted from the Factory Acts apparently by a mere oversight. In the part of the Act where factories and workshops are defined, a number of trades are enumerated by name as being non-textile factories and workshops, and all the rest to which the Act applies are brought in by a general description, as places where labour is exercised for hire in or incidental to the making, altering, repairing, ornamenting, finishing, or adapting for sale of any article. Now, washing is not making, altering, repairing, ornamenting, finishing, or adapting for sale; but it is evidently akin to repairing, and there is no such difference between repairing and washing as to make it wrong to include one under the Act and right to include the other.

An unsuccessful attempt was made to bring the laundries under the Act of 1891, and, in this year's Bill, a laundry clause was included by Mr. Asquith, the principal effect of which

was that "the Factory Acts shall apply to every laundry which is carried on by way of trade or for purpose of gain." This was not accepted, and its opponents, not daring entirely to refuse legislation, concocted instead a special set of laundry regulations (*k*) which, though they set a limit of hours, make it quite impossible for any inspector to see that the limit is enforced.

Night work is not forbidden; work may be carried on during any part of the twenty-four hours by women, young persons, and children, since the times between which the day's work is to be taken are not fixed. Children may work—actual work, exclusive of meals—as much as ten hours out of the twenty-four, young persons twelve, women fourteen. The weekly limit (but how is it to be enforced?) is to be thirty hours for children, and sixty for young persons and women. With overtime for women, sixty-six hours a week may be worked.⁽ⁱ⁾ There are no regulations for meal-times except the usual regulation for spell, namely, that no protected person is to be employed for more than five hours without an interval of at least half-an-hour for a meal. Consequently, a child need not have more than half-an-hour's rest in the course of (not out of) ten hours' work, a young person two half-hours in the course of twelve hours, and a woman two half-hours in the course of fourteen hours.^(j)

The hopeful point about these extraordinary regulations is that the matter cannot possibly rest as it is. They will be found impossible in practice, and there will be a demand for fresh legislation. Working women should watch the inspectors' reports, and be ready to press the cause of the laundresses. Some people say that washerwomen like a fifteen hours' working day. It would be well for the Women's Guild to

(h) The regulations do not apply to all laundries. Not only prison laundries and such others as are subject to inspection are exempted, but also all *bona fide* religious and charitable institutions, as well as laundries where not more than two persons are employed besides members of the family dwelling on the premises.

(i) Thus a child may work ten hours on three days a week. An experienced inspector said to me that "the alternate day system is murder," but this is worse, for on the alternate day system a child has a half-holiday every second week on one of the three days. A woman's work with overtime may be fourteen hours on four days a week (making fifty-six hours), and ten hours on the fifth day, supposing the law observed.

(j) Or three half-hours when any part of the fourteen hours is worked as part of the weekly limit of overtime.

inquire into this, to compare the condition of the textile operative with that of the laundress, and see that they and the laundresses understand the effects of regulation. If working women would arrive at a thoughtful decision on such matters, and make it known through their organisations, it would be impossible for the House of Commons and the public to be puzzled by fanciful and contradictory descriptions of "the opinions of working women." When the overtime question was before the grand committee of the House of Commons this spring, Mr. Matthews, the former Home Secretary, exclaimed in the course of the discussion, "I have my own opinion as to what the opinions of working women are, and to that opinion I shall always adhere." Such absurdities would be impossible if working women were alive to the state and the results of the Factory Laws. The guild will be doing a great public service by taking its share in awaking them.

R. NASH.

The Central Committee of the Women's Co-operative Guild will be obliged if each branch will pass a resolution giving their opinions on the following questions, and send it to the general secretary:—

1. Should the conditions of work in non-textile trades be made similar to those in textile trades, namely, (1) a ten hours day, (2) two hours for meals, (3) a four and a half hours spell of work, (4) a real Saturday half-holiday?
2. Should work in laundries be subject to similar regulations?

MSA 32598

END OF
TITLE